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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQ CONSTITUTION AND SUNNI
ASSASSINATIONS, SADDAM TRIAL; BAGHDAD

[1](#)1. SUMMARY: The major themes in the daily newspapers on July 25 were the constitutional committee's preparations for the referendum, drafting the constitution, and the latest developments of the security situation. END SUMMARY.

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[1](#)A. "Is it assassination of individuals or attitudes?"
(7/25)

Al-Ittihad (affiliated with Patriotic Union of Kurdistan led by Iraqi president Jalal Talabani) published a third-page editorial by Abdul Hadi Mahdi about the assassination of the Sunni members in the constitutional committee:

"Right now the political situation in Iraq is at its most dangerous and sensitive point. Any disruption in the political process has the potential to demolish the building that we are constructing - the new Iraq. Iraqis have paid for that building with their blood and we must continue to build it.

The current stage requires peace from all Iraqi groups. Those who originally boycotted the elections only agreed to participate in the constitutional committee after some very difficult negotiations, resulting in 25 Sunni members being added to the constitutional committee.

The constitutional process continues to move forward despite disagreements among the members of the constitutional committee. We believe that such disagreements benefit the constitutional process. We believe that they are creating a new document, with new ideas that will benefit Iraq. We deny that they are doing this for personal profit or from a constitution drafted beforehand.

I believed that the Iraqi people can work through these disagreements and finish the constitution on time.

Unfortunately, the assassination of the three Sunni members of the constitutional committee may have changed all of that. This assassination is an attempt to prevent the constitutional committee from doing its duty and drafting the constitution to meet the August 15th deadline.

After the assassination, the Sunni group in the constitutional committee suspended its membership. However, it did not withdraw from the committee. There is a big difference between suspension and withdrawal.

The Sunni members suspended their membership to protest against the assassination of three of their own. They have a list of demands that they want the government to address before returning to the committee. The government has announced that it will address all of their demands as well as provide protection for constitutional committee members.

This assassination did not target specific figures, rather it intended to thwart the whole constitutional process.

The Iraqi people have started to ask questions about the assassinations. They want to know what group or groups were responsible for the killing. Who benefited from this assassination? What are the causes of this assassination? Why were those Sunni members targeted? There are only 20 days before the draft of the constitution is due. We hope that the Sunni members will return to the constitutional committee as soon as possible in order to complete the constitution on time.

We have to admit that because the government took a long time to form the constitutional committee, the process has been delayed. This postponement has not been good for the process. However, we are confident that the Sunni members will return to the constitutional committee and the assassinations will serve as a strong motive for all political groups to finish drafting the constitution. They are working for the future of the new Iraq."

B. "Saddam's trial is a national demand" (7/25)

Al-Bayyan (affiliated with Islamic Ad-Da'wa Party led by PM Ibrahim Al-Jaafari) published a third-page editorial by Salim Rasool about Saddam's trial:

"Some people are afraid of Saddam Hussein's upcoming trial. They are afraid of the consequences the trial may bring down upon them. These fears come from a lack of understanding of Iraqi history and Iraqi social structure.

Because of their narrow minds, some people think that Saddam committed crimes only in the north and the south, excluding the center and the west of Iraq for sectarian reasons. They believe that expediting Saddam's trial will create many problems, possibly damaging the political process. These people suggest that the only way to prevent these type of problems is to delay Saddam's trial.

These opinions are inconsistent with a true accounting of Iraq's history. In reality Saddam committed crimes against all Iraqis. No one was safe from him. He executed thousands of Iraqis, all from different nationalities, religions and sects.

No one can characterize Saddam's crimes as being against people of a specific sect or nationality. Saddam even targeted his relatives and his followers. Some of them were fed to dogs while others melted in the sulfur pots.

Saddam's crimes were against the whole community. I believe that even if Saddam is executed, nothing will be destabilized or harmed. The Iraqi people are waiting for Saddam's death sentence. Only criminal Ba'athists seek to create problems concerning Saddam's just sentence.

The Iraqi people will regain their stability by taking Saddam to trial for his crimes. His trial is an insistent national demand."

Khalilzad